

United States Government

Department of Energy  
Bonneville Power Administration

# memorandum

DATE: December 5, 2001

REPLY TO  
ATTN OF: KEC-4

SUBJECT: Supplement Analysis for the Watershed Management Program EIS (DOE/EIS-0265/SA-73)

TO: Jay Marcotte, KEW-4  
Fish and Wildlife Project Manager

**Proposed Action:** Increase In Stream Flows to De-watered Stream Reaches in the Walla Walla Basin

**Project No:** 2001-075-00

**Watershed Management Techniques or Actions Addressed Under This Supplement**

**Analysis (See App. A of the Watershed Management Program EIS):** 4.9 Water  
Conveyance: Ditches and Canal Lining; 4.18 Purchase / Negotiate Water Right; 4.19 File for  
Instream Water Right

**Location:** Walla Walla County, Washington.

**Proposed by:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) and the Walla Walla County  
Conservation District.

**Description of the Proposed Action:** BPA proposes to fund a project with the Walla Walla County Conservation District that will enhance the streamflow of the Walla Walla River, and thus improve habitat for steelhead and bull trout. Though the proposal submitted to the Northwest Power Planning Council for funding included several components, the portions of this project that are planned for this year are the purchase or lease of water rights for instream flow, and improvement of irrigation delivery system efficiency.

The proposal to purchase or lease instream flow will be coordinated with other agencies, particularly the Washington Departments of Ecology and Fish & Wildlife. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife has an active program to place irrigated farmland into the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), which has the effect of eliminating irrigation withdrawals and establishing a riparian vegetation buffer. The Department of Ecology seeks out landowners that are participating in the CREP program, and purchases or leases the unused water right. Because the Department has limited funding capabilities, the Conservation District has proposed to augment instream water rights acquisitions in the Walla Walla River. The Conservation District has estimated that up to 1500 gallons per minute (gpm) of enhanced flow may be added to the Walla Walla River under this program.

In addition to the water rights acquisitions, the Conservation District has proposed piping three existing irrigation conveyance ditches that are known to lose, through evaporation or seepage, significant amounts of water. Water currently is pumped to these ditches from the Walla Walla River via a series of pipes. There is no direct return flow of water from these ditches to the river.

The proposal is to install a total of 17,035 feet of pipe in the three ditches. Pipe will be laid in the existing ditch, and existing spoils piled along the sides of the ditches will be used to cover the pipes. The estimated loss of water that is currently occurring in the existing ditches due to evaporation and seepage is approximately 650 gpm. Once piped, the irrigation district that owns the water right will transfer the saved 650 gpm of water to instream flow in the Walla Walla River.

**Analysis:** The compliance checklist for this project was completed by Mike Pelissier of the Walla Walla County Conservation District, and meets the standards and guidelines for the Watershed Management Program Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Record of Decision (ROD).

The Middle Columbia River Evolutionarily Significant Unit of steelhead, listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act in March 1999, is present in the project area. The Columbia River population segment of the bull trout, listed in 1998, is also present. BPA determined that the proposed project may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect, steelhead and bull trout; the National Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concurred with this determination on August 22 and September 7, 2001 (respectively). No other listed species, critical habitat, or essential fish habitat will be affected by the proposed project.

The three irrigation conveyance ditches to be piped are isolated from all natural streams, wetlands, and other water bodies. The conveyance ditches are separated from the Walla Walla River by the existing pump and piping intake system, and there is no direct discharge connection to this river. BPA thus has determined that construction as now proposed would not negatively affect any natural waterbodies, including the Walla Walla River. The conveyances have traditionally been cleaned out at regular intervals (every two to three years), and the removed sediments, or pilings, placed beside the ditches. These pilings will be used to cover the pipe once it is layed in the ditch. Accordingly, no new soil disturbance will take place, and it is BPA's determination that no cultural resources surveys are necessary.

The Conservation District is a member of the Washington / Oregon Bi-State Technical Workgroup that includes Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Washington Department of Ecology, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Columbia Conservation District, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR), Walla Walla Watershed Council, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, Oregon Water Resources Department, irrigation districts, local landowners, and conservation groups. The Bi-State Technical Workgroup has been meeting approximately once a month since early 2000. The Workgroup has regularly discussed the proposed project in a public setting.

The proposed project has also been regularly presented to a working group composed of the Washington Water Trust, Oregon Water Watch, Washington State University Cooperative Extension, Walla Walla County Commissioners, Washington Department of Ecology, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Walla Walla District of the Army Corps of Engineers, Nelson Irrigation District, Washington State Governor's Salmon Office, sportsman groups and landowners. This group has discussed flow enhancement topics, including this project, in a public setting at regular intervals since February 2001.

**Findings:** The project is generally consistent with the Northwest Power Planning Council's Fish and Wildlife Program, as well as BPA's Watershed Management Program EIS (DOE/EIS-0265) and ROD. This Supplement Analysis finds that: 1) implementing the proposed action will not result in any substantial changes to the Watershed Management Program that are relevant to environmental concerns; and 2) there are no significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the Watershed Management Program or its impacts. Therefore, no further NEPA documentation is required.

/s/ Richard Yarde

Richard Yarde  
Environmental Specialist

CONCUR:

/s/ James Kehoe for

Thomas C. McKinney  
NEPA Compliance Officer

DATE: December 5, 2001

**Attachments:**

Environmental Checklist

cc: (w/ attachments)

Mike Pelissier

Walla Walla County Conservation District

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